

Close Friend Sheds New Light On Lafcadio Hearn's Character

Worked Here in Poverty Before Acquiring International Fame for Japanese Studies

Mitchell MacDonald, of the United States, was the second.

ates him. The record of his companionship with Lafcadio Hearn is a golden page in the history of friendship. He knew Japan well, and within a little while he had secured for Lafcadio a position as teacher of English in a normal school in far away Matsuyama in Izumo. Here Hearn found himself in a way was the mystery of the blue and gray of old Japan revealed to him, and here he married his lovely wife, a Samurai lady. Here he was no more undersized; here he was no more ugly; here he was the lord of his little establishment, and all gracious and kindly and lovely things were done for his pleasure.

In a letter from Japan to Hendrick Hearn shows that he had become more disillusioned and more reserved than

He wrote:

"I can't feel toward men generally any longer as I used to—I feel, in short, a little misanthropic. The general facts seem to be that all realizations of relations between men are of self-interest in the main; that the pleasures of those relations are illusions—dependent upon youth, power, position etc., for degree of intensity."

"May I interrupt you, Mr. Hendrick?" I asked, "to inquire if in Japan there is that Hearn says about Japan there is a danger of war with her?"

"There is no peril in Japan for us," came the reply, no doubt inspired by the Hearn influence, "either yellow white or envious green, if only we learn to love the golden radiance of her light. There is no people so ready, so willing, so anxious to meet us in full accord with the Golden Rule as the men and women of Japan."

"To come back to Hearn," I continued, "was he as unattractive as he fancied himself?"

He Was Not an Unattractive Man

"No, he was not unattractive. He was well built, something like the late Jacob Wendell, jr., the actor, save that he did not carry himself so well; he had nothing of Wendell's buoyant springy step. His head was well set on his shoulders, and his hair, which later in life became very gray, was then dark brown. He had a broad

mustache somewhat lighter than his hair. He had an aquiline nose, broad, clear brow and a perfectly modelled chin and throat.* He was then thirty-nine years old. In a game of tether-ball at school he had been injured in his left eye and had lost the sight of it, although it was not offensive in appearance. (The

not offensive in appearance. The ir-
remained intact, but the pupil was
somewhat irregular, so that while
was not surprising to learn that I
could not see with it, I cannot unde-
stand how any one could have been
distressed by looking at it. The right
eye protruded more than is usual at
was exceedingly myopic. He had, I
told me, a good deal of strabismus.

told me once, only about one-twelfth normal vision. Some dreadful friend had once told him that I should avoid the society of women because they, with their greater tenderness and delicacy, would suffer distress in looking at his blind eye. And so, being one of the most sensitive mortals, he usually spoke holding his

left hand over his blind eye lest I offend. When some one once asked Captain MacDonald if he really was as uncanny in appearance as his detractors made him out to be, 'To me,' answered the captain, 'he was always beautiful.' I can say the same. His voice was gentle and there was a touch of Irish brogue in his speech, just the

little rounding out of words, the Celtic strain that seems to make them complete.

"He was, moreover, a real, live, masculine man. There was nothing sissy or effeminate about him. In fact, he could and would even tell a risque story. There is no use of making an angel out of our hero. He was a real man."

Quotations from the letters of Hearn to Hendrick are always interesting, but in one letter Hearn lays down the core of his system—the idea that he found both in Buddhism and modern science. Without a grasp of his notions on inherited memory and unconscious feelings, a knowledge or appre-

The passage follows:

"The law that inherited memory becomes transmuted into intuitions or instincts is not absolute. Only some memories, or rather parts of them, are so transformed. Others remain—will not die. When you feel the charm of that old, faded old

the charm of that tree and that lawn — many who would have loved you were they able to live as in other days were looking through you and remembering happy things. At least I think it must have been so. The different ways in which different places and things thus make appearances would be partly explained; the su-

preme charm referring to reminiscences reaching through the longest chain of life and the highest. But no pleasure of this sort can have so ghostly a sweetness as that which belongs to the charm of an ancestral home in which happy generations have been. Then how much dead love lives again, and how many

The Hearn letters to Hendrick, as well as those to other correspondents like Captain Mitchell MacDonald, H. K. Kibbler, Dan McGuffin, and

Elizabeth Wetmore, will probably live as long as any other letters in English or American literature. The master artist and thinker is never absent from these personal communications. He wrote to his friends without any suffering, but frankly and intimately. He poured forth his ideas and gave

descriptions of his methods of working, accounts of his devotion to his art, and reminiscences of his struggles. When I looked at the original of the letter in Mr. Hendrick's home on East Fortieth Street, New York, and saw the handwriting—the lines as they flowed from Hearn's pen—a sort of feticish feeling came over me. These, then, were

the original of letters the publication of which swept the literary world into deep admiration. As the massive towering figure of Mr. Hendrick, brimming with life and good nature, be over me, I mentally pictured the slight stature of Hearn, 5 feet 3 inches, as I thought of Hendrick, though eleven years younger, as of a physical giant.

man of Hearn, the rather diminutive
timid writer. Hendrick was proud
having had Hearn's friendship, for
shares with Captain MacDonald the dis-
tinction of having retained it to the
time of Hearn's death.